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ABSTRACT

A tutorial program of family life education has been developed for use in the homes of parents who are clients of Franklin County Children Services (FCCS) in Columbus, Ohio. The subject matter of the Parent Tutorial Curriculum (PTC) is divided into five content areas: self esteem (2 modules), communications (9), child rearing (4), homemaking (9), and helping families manage (6). Curriculum materials include written lesson plans for the modules, filmstrips, illustrated teaching aids, charts, pamphlets, and other printed handouts. The PTC is designed for use by casework staff when making home visits to clients who display some learning need. The overall needs of both low-income and middle-class clients are the basis for the educational objectives of the PTC that are limited to introductory and basic knowledges, attitudes, and actions. The rationale for the PTC is linked to certain phenomena encountered in efforts from FCCS to provide family life education for the parents of needy and neglected children: difficulties that hinder enrollment of clients in instructional groups, problems created by clients' failure to participate in family life educational programs, and special advantages of a tutorial curriculum as an educational strategy. (YLB)

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THE PARENT TUTORIAL CURRICULUM: A HOME INSTRUCTION PROGRAM OF FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION FOR CLIENTS OF A CHILD WELFARE AGENCY *

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* Main product of a Title I, Higher Education act of 1965 project approved and funded by the Ohio Board of Regents

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ABSTRACT: The Parent Tutorial Curriculum (PTC) is a family life education program designed to be used in the homes of adult clients who have been reluctant to enroll in family life education programs that use a group approach. The curriculum features instructional modules, filmstrips, and published handouts, and was developed as the main product of a Title I, Higher Education Act of 1965 project.

The Parent Tutorial Curriculum: A Home Instruction Program of Family Life Education for Clients of a Child Welfare Agency

A tutorial program of family life education was developed as part of a 12 month Title I, Higher Education Act of 1965 project during 1978-79 by the Parent and Family Life Education (P&FLE) Department at Franklin County Children Services (FCCS), an agency serving the needs of needy and neglected children and their parents in the Columbus, Ohio metropolitan area. The Parent Tutorial Curriculum (PTC) was designed for use in the homes of parents who are FCCS clients and who were not ready to enroll in the Department's regular family life education programs that feature group instruction.

The subject matter of the PTC is divided into five content areas: self-esteem, communications, childrearing, homemaking, and family management. Each area contains a number of instructional modules as indicated in the following list of content areas and modules:

1. Self-Esteem
   - Module I Self-Esteem: What It is and How to Change it
   - Module II Self-Esteem in Children

II Communications
   - Module I What Do We Mean By Communication
   - Module II Who Owns the Problem
   - Module III How To Active Listen
   - Module IV How To Send "I" Messages
   - Module V How To Resolve Conflicts
   - Module VI What To Do With Values Conflicts

Module VII Teens: Problem Ownership

Module VIII Teens: Values Clarification and Value Conflicts

Module IX Adolescent Conflict: Parent Vs. Teens

III Child Rearing

Module I The Early Years

Module II The Middle Years

Module III Adolescence

Module IV Behavior Management Techniques

IV Homemaking

Food Nutrition

Module I Food Makes The Difference

Module II The Basic Four

Module III Planning Meals

Module IV The Supermarket Game

Module V Keeping Food Safe

Module VI Stirring It Up (use of recipes and measuring methods)

Housekeeping And Home Care

Module I Keeping A Clean House

Module II Doing The Laundry

Module III Control Of Household Pests

V Helping Families Manage

Module I Management As A System

Module II Inputs-Demands and Resources

Module III Decision Making

Module IV Planning And Implementing

Module V Financial Management

Module VI Managing Household Activities

Curriculum Materials include written lesson plans for the modules, filmstrips, illustrated teaching aids, charts, pamphlets, and other printed handouts. Filmstrips are shown in the homes of clients with the aid of filmstrip viewers and cassette players.

The PTC is designed to be used by casework staff when making home visits to clients who display some learning need and who might benefit from the curriculum. The 40 service workers who received training to use the PTC included caseworkers, case-aides, and service technicians, plus workers from the Homemaker and Home Manager Department who regularly provide home care services and instruction in other content areas. The FCCS service worker can select as many or as few of the modules or learning activities as desired according to the particular needs, interests, capabilities, and limitations of the client to be tutored. The adult client's active participation as a learner is encouraged through a variety of learning exercises, activity charts, and assignments to be carried out at home during the interval between tutoring sessions.

The Needs of the Client Whom the PTC is Intended to Help

The basic intent of the Parent Tutorial Curriculum can be understood and appreciated when the needs of the typical low income client which the curriculum is designed to help are considered:

Client's overall needs: Client feels confused, overwhelmed, and immobilized by the inhibiting climate of the family situation, and the discouraging experiences of coping unsuccessfully with the community environment. Consequently, the client feels apprehensive, apathetic, and resists utilizing needed agency and community resources.

Capability level desired from client: Client is able to understand and accept (1) the reality of the family situation and (2) the client's available options for positive action. Client experiences some immediate minor success in managing the family situation. Client is more emotionally

independent from the pervasive climate of the problematic family situation, is less intimidated by the possibility of negative experiences in dealing with the community environment, and is willing and able to utilize needed agency and community resources. Client is able to perceive the family's strengths and potentials which have been latent and not fully developed. Client can begin to use these strengths and potentials in dealing with family problems.

This description of a typical low income client's overall needs and desired capability level was written during the early phase of the Title I project before the instructional modules were developed. Comparable statements of needs and capability goals were also written for the middle class client with only an additional reference to the middle class advantages that the client should be enabled to draw upon in dealing with family problems. These statements present a picture of low and middle income families who are long term client, such as, the middle class parent who has an unruly teengager. Unlike the long term client whose home is the place where the instruction takes place, the middle class parent of an unruly teenager has relatively brief contact with FCCS at an agency office location. Therefore, some of the PTC communication modules are written with the teenager's problems in mind and are especially suited for use with a parent of an unruly teenager in an office counseling situation. The following statement of needs and desired capability level applies to the middle class, short term client who is the parent of an unruly teenager:

Client's overall needs: Client cannot understand behavior of unruly teenager and is frustrated by an inability to cope with this behavior. Client is overwhelmed and discouraged by an apparent lack of available alternatives to deal with teenager's behavior and the problem situation.

Capability level desired from client: Client is able to understand teenager's behavior, plus take positive steps in relation to the teenager's situation. Client is willing to utilize recommended agency and community resources which can help facilitate workable alternatives for coping with teenager's situation.

It should become clear that the educational objectives for the PTC would have to be somewhat limited in comparison with the more extensive and ambitious goals a client might achieve by participating in group instruction provided by professional educators. Through involvement in the PTC it is hoped that the client will achieve (1) a basic understanding of the essential dynamics and patterns of the family situation and family members' behavior, (2) an introductory knowledge of some immediate options for constructive action on the part of the client, (3) a partial emancipation from feelings that are inhibiting and overwhelming, (4) some immediate minor success by taking some simple, positive steps to improve the family situation, and (5) a willingness to begin utilizing resources outside the home which can make additional growth and achievement possible. In comparison with objectives suitable for family life education programs conducted by professional educators, the objectives for the PTC must be appropriate for a program with simpler content than can be taught by casework staff who may have had no provious training in the fields of child development, family relations, and adult education but who can be trained for the task of tutoring clients (with the help of the PTC).

The Rationale for the Parent Tutorial Curriculum

The rationale for the PTC is linked to certain phenomena encountered in the efforts of FCCS to provide family life education for the parents of

needy and neglected children: (1) the difficulties that hinder the recruitment and enrollment of clients in instructional groups, (2) the problems created by clients' failure to participate in family life education programs, and (3) the special advantages of a tutorial curriculum in family life education as an educational strategy.

The difficulties hindering enrollment of clients in instructional groups as a vehicle for family life education can be summarized as follows:

1. The client's low level of self esteem which contributes to overwhelming feelings of apprehension, apathy, and/or resistance regarding the prospect of enrolling in any kind of group (e.g., educational social community action, religious or other).
2. The client's inability to perceive the value and benefits of family life education due to personal assumptions, such as, that the family situation is really satisfactory the way it is or the family situation is too difficult to modify even with outside help.
3. The problems of arranging the transportation of the client to an instructional group which are so complicated by bureaucratic red tape, that it's easy for any client with a nervous stomach to avoid the "unpleasant experience" of having to enroll in a group the client has no desire to attend simply by offering the excuse "I couldn't get a ride."
4. The difficult role of the service worker who often has a negative image as the representative of an agency empowered by the county to remove children from homes, to insist upon adherence to public welfare's rules and regulations, and to challenge and overrule various family standards of morality and behavior judged unacceptable by society.

It needs to be pointed out that in spite of the agency's authority, the service worker has, in fact, limited leverage to make the client do what the client doesn't want to do. Furthermore, the client who attends an instructional group solely because "my caseworker made me come" frequently gains little insight or benefit for the experience. Typically, such a client (for example , whose children are in foster care) will come grudgingly but regularly to each weekly session of the group and then loudly demand to have her children returned home, simply because "I did what I was asked to do to get my kids back (i.e., attend family life education programs), and now it's the agency's turn to keep its end of the bargain."

Certain problems develop because clients fail to participate in family life education programs or take advantage of other helpful resources:

1. The traumatic family situation continues to deteriorate.
2. Extra expense is forced upon society because of the continued high costs of welfare and the high costs of having to remove children from their homes and put them in foster homes or other forms of institutional placement.

In view of the difficulties involved in enrolling certain clients in instructional groups and in view of the unresolved family problems and the high costs of welfare and placement of children away from home, the PTC was conceived as a pivotal, essential strategy for attempting to deal more effectively with the type of client whose problems may be related to an inability to take advantage of resources outside the home.

Although the PTC is not a reasonable alternative for every client who is not enrolled in group family life education programs, it is, nevertheless, an important development that has certain key advantages and benefits:

1. The PTC is one way of providing family life education for a client

without having to insist upon participation in a group. This means one less "red flag" to increase the client's anxiety and resistance. If the client has an enjoyable experience with PTC, this should present a prime opportunity to show the client the types of information and resources that would be available later on in an instructional group. PTC is intended to help a client acquire enough self-assurance to be able to enroll in a regular family life education program.

2. The client should be able to see the values of family life education if if the PTC can help the client to make some minor but significant improvements in the family situation which the tutor can praise and point out as important stepping stones to further progress.

3. The service worker's role in working with the client should be enhanced by the training given to prepare the worker to use the PTC. Although the service worker can never totally eliminate the negative image as perceived by the client, the PTC should give the worker an increased opportunity to be viewed in a more positive manner. If the PTC can help the client deal with negative feelings and perceive the available resources and the community more favorably, then the worker should have more influence helping the client reach out to take advantage of additional resources. Furthermore, in addition to upgrading the skills of agency personnel, the PTC training program for workers should serve as an opportunity to strengthen the agency's efficient use of available manpower. If limited funds are available to hire additional staff to serve as PTC tutors, it makes sense to train existing staff who can provide instruction to clients as part of their regular service routine when making visits to the homes of clients.